

WEST WILTSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the: **Cabinet**

Held on: **Wednesday 5 November 2008**

Held at: **Council Chamber, Bradley Road, Trowbridge**

Present:

Councillors: Payne (Leader), Conley, Davis, Eaton, March, Mounde, Phillips OBE and While

Also present: Cllr Carbin, Cllr J Osborn, Cllr Gregory Coombes (Melksham Without Parish Council), Insp. David Minty (Wiltshire Police) and Cllr Francis Morland (Chapmanslade Parish Council)

Officers: Finance Service Manager (AB), Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer (TD), Corporate Director and Head of Paid Services (IG), Community Development Officer (KG), Principal Housing Renewal Officer (JH), Head of Legal Services (NM), and Member Support Officer (HP)

47. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Fortescue and Wiltshire.

48. Declarations of Interest

None were received.

49. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

50. Announcements from the Leader

The Leader made the following announcements:

- The Leader welcomed Insp. David Minty of Wiltshire Police to the meeting.

- All ten of West Wiltshire District Council's public toilets have been awarded full marks by the British Toilet Association. It is the second consecutive year that the 'royal flush' of five star facilities has been achieved by the Council and its maintenance partner InterPublic Urban Systems. Congratulations to all involved.
- The Council's first Council Tax road show in Bradford-on-Avon last Saturday was a huge success. Council staff helped reduce two customers' council tax bills by 25 percent and offer two other families help with their rent and council tax bills. The road shows offer help and advice to residents on how to potentially reduce their Council Tax bills, raise awareness on how to get help with rent, dampness, energy efficiency and pest control and other queries – an important task during the current economic downturn.

51. Presentation of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Director and Head of Paid Services (IG) introduced a report presenting the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

This was considered during the following agenda item.

Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs)

Insp. Minty reported that the Wiltshire County Division had achieved the highest detection rate of the fifteen divisions compared, and this would not have been possible without the help of NPTs.

Cllr Mounde felt there was a lack of evidence of high abstraction rates for Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), and the recommendation was amended accordingly.

Cllr Phillips OBE expressed concern that NPT officers are only occasionally attending Parish Council meetings. Insp. Minty replied that this should not be the case and agreed to look into the issue.

Cllr Conley expressed concern that that the NPT in her parish is difficult to contact via telephone and email. Insp. Minty reported that Wiltshire Police's telephone system has been given further investment and is gradually improving. He agreed to look into the lack of response to emails.

Cllr Davis expressed support for a pilot taking place in Malmesbury where volunteers are provided with 'speed guns' to reduce speeding offences in rural areas.

Affordable housing

Cllr March expressed concern that the Council appears not to be meeting its affordable housing targets, and requested figures detailing how many affordable houses are being built, and by whom. The Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer (TD) replied that it is important to distinguish between affordable houses built to fulfil Section 106 agreements and those built by housing societies. He added that the Council's target for 30% of new housing to be affordable is achieved. He agreed to provide the figures requested by Cllr March.

Cllr Mounde suggested making new attempts at persuading owners of vacant properties to make them available as affordable housing.

The Corporate Director and Head of Paid Services (IG) added that the Council will continue to make strenuous efforts to address this issue, but that it is a regional and national problem.

Support to joint scrutiny work

The Leader suggested that officer support be made available for joint scrutiny work when scrutiny work for this Council permits.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. Cabinet directs resources towards enforcing statutory regulations regarding HMOs;**
- 2. Work will be done to ensure that recommendations in the report concerning migrant workers and HMOs are taken forward by the new Wiltshire Council;**
- 3. All possible ways of increasing the volume of affordable housing locally will be investigated and pursued;**
- 4. A letter will be sent from the Council to the Chief Constable and Chair of the Police Authority:**
 - **Expressing its strong support for the general principle of neighbourhood policing, and the desire that it should live up to its expectations;**
 - **Expressing its concern about the abstraction rates of officers from NPTs, and requesting trend information on these abstraction rates; and**
- 5. Additional officer support is made available to support the work of JOSTB and associated task groups up to the end of March 2009, when scrutiny work for this Council allows.**

52. Migrant Workers and Houses in Multiple Occupation in West Wiltshire 2008

The Community Development Officer (KG) and Principal Housing Renewal Officer (JH) introduced a report informing Cabinet on the findings of the report – 'Migrant Workers and Houses in Multiple Occupation in West Wiltshire'

commissioned through the IDeA's Migration Excellence Programme, and on the recommendations of Scrutiny Committee of 17th September.

The Leader asked if statistics in the report took into account the reported outflow of migrant workers returning to their native countries. The Community Development Officer (KG) replied that the reported 'A8' migrant population in West Wiltshire is taken from a number of studies, and that collecting accurate and up-to-date statistics on migrant workers is very difficult. The Local Government Office and Office of National Statistics are currently working to improve this.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. Cabinet recommends that the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Transition Board consider the report and identify where and how the work around migrant workers should be taken forward;**
- 2. Cabinet recommends that this future work should address the key issues, recommendations and list of future tasks identified in the report; and**
- 3. Recommendations and a list of potential next steps will be circulated to Keith Robinson and Cllr Jane Scott.**

53. River Biss Public Realm Design Guide (PRDG) SPD

Cllr Mounde introduced a report requesting that Cabinet adopt the amended Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Cllr Phillips OBE expressed concern that the document included insufficient reference to the likely magnitude of essential flood defence works. The Corporate Director and Head of Paid Services (IG) replied that the purpose of the SPD is to put in place an overall design concept, providing potential investors with a guide to what will be required. Full risk assessments and detailed modelling will be done at a later stage.

The Leader invited Cllr Morland to address the chamber. Cllr Morland advised that the only feasible method of flood mitigation would be to create reservoirs upstream in the parishes of North Bradley and Heywood, which could be very expensive.

RESOLVED:

- That Cabinet recommends to Council the adoption of the SPD, and asks Council to note the section dealing with flood risk (section 6.9).**

54. Performance Monitoring 2008-09: Quarter one April – June 2008 and Quarter two July - Sep 2008

Cllr Davis introduced a report summarising the Council's performance in the first two quarters of 2008-09.

Cllr Mounde reported that David Hubbard (Development Control Service Manager) is recovering well from his operation, and that his acting replacement, Bob Young, is proving very capable in David's absence.

RESOLVED:

- **That Cabinet notes the report.**

55. Sustainable Communities Act 2007

Cllr March introduced a report recommending that Cabinet support the Notice of Motion proposed at the meeting of Council on 22 October 2008.

Cllr Mounde suggested that Cabinet acknowledge the work already done by Wiltshire County Council on this issue.

RESOLVED:

- **That Cabinet acknowledges the work already done by Wiltshire County Council on this issue, and supports the Notice of Motion.**

56. Financial Monitoring 2008-09

Cllr While introduced a report informing Cabinet of the Council's financial position for the period ending 30 September 2008.

RESOLVED:

- **That Cabinet notes the current financial position and the projected likely out-turn.**

57. Write-off report

Cllr While introduced a report proposing the write-off of various debts as at 30 September 2008.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Notes the action of the Section 151 officer in writing-off the debts under £500 totalling £112,280.72;**
- 2. Approves the write-off of the debts over £500 totalling £191,077.85;**

3. **Notes that the total amount of debt written-off from the proposals above equals £303,358.57; and**
4. **Requests further detailed work to be carried out in respect of the Housing storage cost debt.**

58. Update on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Cllr Eaton gave the following update:

- Staff loss at this Council remains steady at 3-4 per month;
- The development of a joint waste-disposal service has been approved by the Implementation Executive (IE). Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council will be hiring consultants to look at a cost-efficient way of implementing this;
- Parish Councils are unlikely to have the power to call planning applications before Committee in the new Wiltshire Council.

Cllr Phillips OBE gave the following update:

- Cllr Phillips OBE voted against requisitioning City Hall in Salisbury now because it was built to honour the fallen soldiers of WWII. If it is taken over now it may not be returned;
- More detail on financial arrangements for Wiltshire Council should be forthcoming after the next meeting of the Budget Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED:

- **That Cabinet notes the update.**

59. Cabinet Forward Work Plan

The latest version of the Cabinet Forward Work Plan for the period January – March 2009 was presented.

RESOLVED:

- **That Cabinet approves the Forward Work Plan.**

60. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Cabinet is scheduled for Wednesday 7 January 2008 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, at the Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge.

(7.00 – 8.45pm)

These minutes were prepared by Henry Powell, Member Support Officer, who can be contacted on tel: 01225 776655 ext. 242, or email: hpowell@westwiltshire.gov.uk.